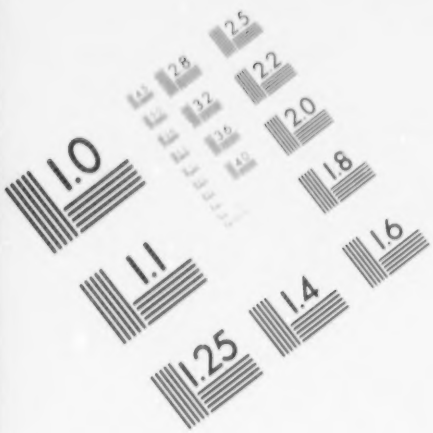

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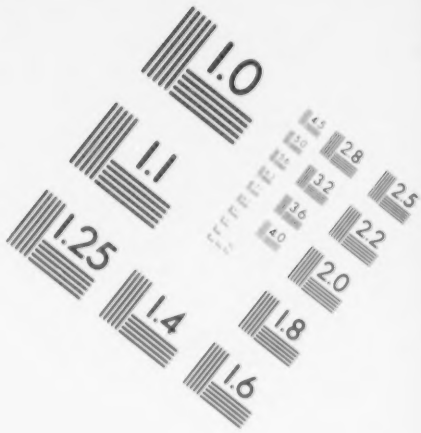

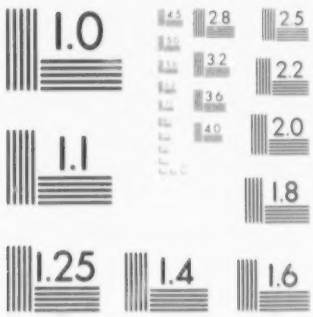

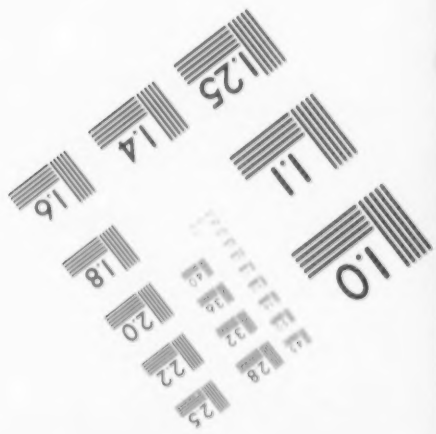

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ABSTRACT

The education of American Indians and Alaska Natives is undertaken predominantly by state controlled and operated public school districts. With 90% of all Native students attending state public schools, significant efforts at improving Native education must focus on state governance and on the issue of change and development as a public school concern. Despite the innovation and creative approaches in Native education grant programs within public schools, these programs have had little influence on the core instructional practices in most public schools. Reforming public education to meet the needs of Native learners means realigning all school system resources and programs rather than depending on special grant programs and Native-operated alternative schools. Recommended strategies include: increasing parent and community involvement in all aspects of school district programs, policies, and procedures; requiring states and school districts to develop comprehensive plans for Native education in order to receive federal funding; developing tribal-state education agreements; developing model regional Native Resource Centers within tribal schools to enhance cooperation between public and tribal schools; encouraging development of Native standards and criteria for the public education of Native students; making state revenue available to tribal schools without affecting the nature of tribal control; and making Impact Aid available to tribal schools. (SV)

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A Concluding Prospectus on Change and Development for Native Education

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Introduction

The education of American Indians and Alaska Natives is predominantly undertaken by state controlled and operated public school districts. With 90 percent of all Native students attending state public schools, with a large number, 30 percent, attending state public schools in large metropolitan areas, significant efforts at improving Native education must focus on state governance and control and on the issue of change and development as a public school distinct concern.

State public schools operate within the context of state law and rules and a statewide structure of governance including local involvement. This context provides standards and criteria which determine the outside limits of what is perceived possible and how the process of change through state governance and local control must take place. This context of governance and control also provides the primary arena, given the number of students involved, in which federal efforts to improve the educational situation and status and to meet the needs of Native learners have been undertaken. Change and reform in Native education must reflect an assessment of the impact such standards and criteria have on the ability of existing federal efforts in Native education to accomplish their purposes and improve the overall education status of American Indians and Alaska Natives. The ability of public schools to meet the needs of Native learners and to effectively respond to the challenges presented by their current education status and situation ultimately must focus change on the social, curricular, and instructional environment of schools as institutions of learning.

Contemporary Native education represents a complex amalgamation of programs and schools which exist within or adjacent to state public school districts. This complexity has many features and characteristics important to change and development in Native education.

There exists three government entities involved in the education of Natives. These entities are state, federal, and tribal governments. Each government entity directly governs and controls schools for Native learners. Private non-profit cooperations organized under state laws are also important for the operation of schools for Natives.

In each type of direct school governance, federal, state, and/or tribal governments, have unique and distinct relationships to the school. The tangle of regulatory, contractual, financial resources, monitoring control and advisory input involved in the relationship between federal, state, and tribal governments in the operation of any one of these various types of school situations is extensive.

All Native education programmatic efforts recognize the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of Native learners and require a formal needs assessment and parental advisory input into the development and implementation of programmatic ideas. Federal Impact Aid also requires tribal and parental advisory input into the expenditure of funds.

Native education programmatic efforts must be developed so as to not supplant the purposes of other programs or the efforts of the school district to provide for the education of American Natives and Alaska Native.

Native students as consumers will utilize all types of school situations (state, tribal, federal, private non-profit) at various times in their life and for various reasons deemed important to them and their parents where opportunity and access enable viable choices.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a series of strategies for the improvement of Native education. Proposals for change and reform in Native education have, for the most part, focused on the assessment and endorsement of specific programmatic approaches and options deemed excellent or appropriate. Less attention has been paid, at the expense of implementing good ideas, to the process and mechanism of change at the level that such change must occur. Good ideas in Native education abound but have little institutional support. Indeed, good ideas and effective approaches are often discouraged or isolated and have little or no influence on curriculum or instructional practice within the school as a whole. Native education must focus on the issue of change and development as a distinct and specific concern.

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This paper attempts to describe strategies which will enable or compel school districts to accurately determine and define the actual needs of Native students enrolled in a particular school district and to respond in a comprehensive and creative manner to meeting these needs. These strategies which focus on the nature of change and development involve a primary consideration of the nature of governance and control and the information and decision making needs of schools and school districts.

These strategies are based on a number of assumptions which follow.

- The most important description of Native student needs are those descriptions which are accurate, comprehensive, and locally based.
- Native student needs and interests, as well as community social and educational needs, must be directly determined.
- In order for schools and school districts to respond, Native student and community needs must be effectively and directly translated into programmatic ideas and objectives locally conceived or deemed valuable.
- Not all Native learners will respond to any given approach or set of options in the same way or at the same time.
- A diversity of approaches or options systematically organized to maximize utilization and choice by students is better than a singular option.
- Solutions offered for improving Native education can not be perceived as terminal ideas no matter how well they work elsewhere.
- Approaches and options must be conceived or adopted locally, based on the real needs and circumstances at hand. They must be allowed to develop overtime if they are to be responsive and effective.
- The goal of reform and change should not be perceived as the ultimate accomplishment of any particular approach or option, but the constant enabling of change, development or enhancement. This will challenge, not only how school districts and schools think about and respond to Native student needs, but will require a general restructuring, to broadly enable schools and school districts to be responsive and effective.
- In school districts with Native learners this necessary broadly based change, though initiated in the interests of Native learners, should have positive effects on the ability of these systems to generally define and respond to the needs of local constituents.

Definition of Problem

Despite significant investment in Native education grant programs, school districts continue to affect and impact the educational performance of Native students in ways which suggest that public school systems, as educational institutions, are not functional for Native learners. A general overview of grant proposals for Native education submitted by public school districts suggests a major reason why, after 20 years of focusing on the educational needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives, the essential status and situation of Native education remains unchanged. Despite the excellence and creativity of grant programs for Native education, these programs are almost without exception justified in terms of what is wrong with the public school system submitting the proposal. In other words, our best and most creative ideas for improving Native education are ultimately dependent on the continuing failure of public school systems.

The institutionalization of this phenomenon creates a system whereby Native education grant programs, which accurately and directly describe the needs of Native children, proposing ideas and programs to meet these needs, are formally defined in competition with the predominant curriculum and instructional program of the public schools. Despite the implementation of Native education programmatic efforts, the curriculum and instructional programs of the school remains intact.

There exist a general inability of school districts to sustain innovation and change. In a system-wide evaluation of the Minneapolis Public Schools regarding the education of Native learners it was noted that throughout the district there existed many fine examples of individual initiatives by teachers, principals and parents. These efforts, however, were not substantially included in the policies and practices of the district and, therefore, are nor replicated throughout the system. The report determined that examples of excellence in Native education are the results of personal initiatives rather than district-wide leadership.

The report emphasized that the best examples of what may be actually working are threatened and vulnerable. "The district on a policy level does not aggressively recruit Native professionals, develop a relationship with the community nor

show continuity in its program efforts for Native students. We all know that no single panacea exits that will improve education for Native children. However, we do know what ingredients will likely raise the probability that it will succeed. These ingredients are a positive relationship with parents and community; a curriculum that integrates culture in content and teaching methodology; Native role models as teachers; administrators and support staff; a supportive and personal environment; high expectations that teach difficult work at each grade level; and access to better opportunities."

Functioning as small additions to the principal curriculum and instructional program, Native education grant programs are isolated and viewed as singularly vital to Native education. Yet it is the predominant curriculum and instructional program, indeed the entire school arena, which must be affected if progress is to be made in meeting the needs of Native learners. One might argue that the current existence of Native education grant programs at the boundary of the schools curriculum and instructional programs makes it less likely that change will occur in the best interest of Native students within the school district as a whole.

Our historic reliance on Native education grant programs in state public schools to respond to the needs of Native learners and meet the challenges presented by their educational situation and status has created a predictable view that financial resources available for Native education are very limited.

Such a perception is not accurate. Financial resources available for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives not only include Native education grant dollars, but the total amount of state revenue available on the same basis as to all students, as well as a significant number of categorical grants from federal and State governments such as those available for special education or for compensatory education. In Minnesota additional state aid is given to school districts with a concentration of students in families receiving AFDC on the assumption that more revenue is necessary to educate children from poor families. When one considers the social, economic and educational characteristics of Native learners, the actual amount of revenue directly "available" for the education of Native learners is very high.

The resources question for Native education in public school districts is not a question of amount, but a question of whether the resources generated by the characteristics of Native learners are actually being spent on these specific learners and whether these resources are organized in complimentary programmatic approaches which are effective and meaningful for specific Native learners.

The role of Native social and cultural uniqueness in education is not solely a curriculum issue resolved by making the content of the curriculum more sensitive or appropriate for Native learners. Nor is the uniqueness of Native learners an issue which can be compartmentalized out of context with what goes on in schools. The entire school society, which is controlled and determined by the district's various policies and procedures, the manner whereby instruction is offered, and the style of pupil and staff interaction affect and impact upon the ability of the school to be functional with students having unique social and cultural backgrounds.

The rules and expectations for student behavior on the part of schools must be congruent with the dispositions for behavior on the part of students within the school setting in order for learning to occur. This proposition, as offered by Getzel in the Handbook of Social Psychology, suggests that theoretically in cross cultural situations there exists two basic strategies for creating a functional learning environment; change the child or change the school.

Attempts to approach the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives, or to address the improvement of current approaches through efforts to change the child or to make the child more appropriate or suitable for learning have failed terribly. These approaches lay at the heart of the assimilationist approach to Native education now deemed as a national policy to be officially undesirable through the proclamation that Natives have unique academic and culturally related education needs. These approaches also set the seeds for negative self-concepts and lower self-esteem on the part of the learner as a person.

A rejection of the "change the child" approach does not, however, reject the vital role of schools as institutions cooperatively participating in the healthy growth and development and socialization of Native children. This role, however, must recognize and respond to the unique character and nature of Native children as they are. Growth and development and socialization must occur connected to the child within the themes and currents which are real to the child socially and culturally.

Curriculum theory has presented a great variety of models on how curriculum is to be developed. Whether one accepts a narrow view which suggests that curriculum represents only content of instruction or the broad view that cur-

riculum represents all planned and informal interactions which occur within the school, all models ultimately describe three sources of curriculum. These include the needs and interests of learners, the needs of society, and available knowledge.

Social and cultural differences should have a significant impact on curriculum if we were to actually apply curriculum development models. The social and cultural uniqueness and diversity of Native learners should correspond to unique and various statements of needs and interests. Tribal governments, societies and Native communities have distinctive needs which define unique statements regarding the purposes and goals for education. The knowledge and information heritage incumbent within the culture and experience of tribal societies and Native communities within America provide a unique and diverse foundation heretofore unavailable for instruction.

If we are to create, change, or develop schools to become effective institutions of learning for Native learners, schools must directly and comprehensively determine the actual needs and interests of learners, the social and community needs to be addressed by education, and make available for instruction the necessary knowledge.

Though these arguments seem reasonable and logical on the surface, schools and school districts rarely go about the business of directly creating their own curriculum and instructional programs. These institutions do not have the internal information gathering and decision making structures which enable them to directly plan and develop their own educational programs. The processes which determine the needs and interests of learners, the needs of society, and which makes knowledge available for instruction are processes which are handled at a significant distance from affected learners, their communities, and outside the context of school.

Decisions related to composition of the educational program are not based upon assessments of actual needs and circumstances, but on assumptions based upon tradition, social and cultural familiarity, and an increasingly generalized nonspecific sense of student and social needs.

Because Native programmatic efforts focus the development of their approaches at one or more of these sources, these efforts can become a mechanism for the development of the school for Native learners by linking such development to the sources of curriculum.

What is true about Native education grant programs within state public school districts is also true in a functional sense about the role of Native operated and controlled schools within any local region of state public school districts. These Native operated and controlled schools, despite the creativity and innovation of their approaches, have not had an influence on change in instructional and curricular practices in regional state public school districts. These schools function like their programmatic counterparts in schools to make it less likely that change will occur within state public schools. Currently, state public school districts are less likely to feel the need to respond to the needs of Native students directly because of Native operated schools.

In many regards, this situation is the outgrowth of the unique recent history of Native education where ideas and approaches have competed on a fundamental terminal (either this or that) level. For example, many tribally operated schools can trace their origin to the significant conflict of a local Johnson O'Malley Parent Committee within the school district often including a formal student and parent boycott of the school district. Efforts to reform state public school districts have competed in a fundamental sense with the development and survival of tribally operated schools. Opportunities to cooperate in a fashion that would benefit the ability of both types of schools to meet, in a more comprehensive manner, the needs of all Native students in the region have long been avoided.

The creation of Native alternative schools, primarily in urban areas, developed under the label of 'survival' schools. Such a label defined a sense of mission which was to educate those Native students the public schools had abandoned. These schools saw themselves as educating a Native student as the student's school of last resort. Predictably the fundamental basis for operating a survival school would disappear if an urban public school did not abandon Native students. Also, communication and cooperation seemed unnecessary when the criteria of failure was viewed as a sort of admission requirement to a Native survival school.

Over the years these types of schools have developed more comprehensive approaches to the education of Native student's needs. Nonetheless, the basic themes affecting the development of the schools generally as well as those affecting Native programmatic efforts in state public schools has caused overall improvement and development in Native education to run its course. The result has been an important and significant variety of schools and programmatic approaches isolated and uncoordinated from each other, unable to influence change and development within state public

schools or to collectively impact the overall status of Native education.

Though Native controlled and operated schools have developed comprehensive elementary and secondary educational programs, they do not serve the majority of Native students in comparison to their state public school counterparts and lack the variety of course offerings many students need or desire. They are also charged, given the characteristics of Native student transfers from state public school districts, to educate those Native students often most in need with significantly less resources than their state public school counterparts.

Framework for Change

If we are serious about meeting the challenges of Native education and of reforming public education to meet the needs of Native learners, we must align all of the school system resources and programs in the interests of meeting the needs of Native learners and not depend solely on special grant programs to do the job. Native education must become a central concern for district-wide planning and development and what is "public" about public education must more directly and effectively involve affected constituents in actual planning and decision making. Formal and informal evaluations and accreditation reviews of school districts must focus on specific Native education needs and the relationship of all resources, policies and practices on meeting Native student needs and enabling achievement.

Existing accreditation efforts utilized by most public schools, such as, the North Central Accreditation process of review, have failed to specifically look at the system-wide impact of school district policies, procedures, its curriculum and instructional program quality of teaching staff, etc. on the needs and performance of Native children. If traditional accreditation reviews of public schools focused on evaluation of instructional programs, policies and procedures, student support services, teaching resources, etc. in relation to the needs of Native learners and their communities, most public schools could not be accredited.

Our new sense of mission and purpose regarding Native education and the role of grant programs must call upon public schools to assess the actual needs of Native students in their schools and to organize the entire school program to meet these needs. Native education must become a vehicle for initiating change and causing reform.

There is no reason why a school district which has had a particular Native education program providing direct services for a period of time should not recognize the need for the program and pick it up from local school district revenue sources. There is no reason why the effective strategies developed by Native education grant programs or modeled in Native schools should not be adopted by the school district. Certainly the extent to which school districts improve attendance and retention rates is the extent to which these districts receive increased state revenue. One could argue, if revenue were the only criteria, that effective strategies could pay for themselves if revenue is increased beyond the point needed to maintain direct services district-wide.

There must be a mechanism in place that requires and enables a public school system to access its failures, determine needs and to change programs, policies, and practices in the interest of Native students.

The fragmented and uncoordinated nature of contemporary Native education, the isolation of programmatic efforts within schools and school districts and of Native operated schools from school districts, affects our ability to respond comprehensively to the needs of Native students and to generate a dynamic for positive and effective change.

Continued change and development in Native education will require a broad perspective. Our objective must be raised above the current limiting and diminishing type of competition, between Native education programs and schools with the predominant state public school system. Some way must be developed to incorporate all the diversity and resources into a systematic regional approach to the education of Native students which enables viable diverse choices for Native students and which compels the desire to be responsive to the needs of Native students. We must develop a system for the public education of Native students in any particular region which makes sense to the education of all American Natives within the region. The challenge is to put the pieces together in such a way that maintains diversity, enables improvement and development within schools, and allows for creativity and innovation. Given this broad approach, the following objectives seem apparent, given the existing features and characteristics of Native education.

1. Schools and school districts must respond in a comprehensive manner to the educational needs of Native learners.
2. Native controlled and/or operated schools must receive equitable funding, whereby, they receive the same funding upon the

same basis for the same type of students as state public schools.

3. Native students should be enabled to maximize utilization of schools and programmatic options available to Natives specifically or to all students within a region irrelevant of the type of school (state, tribal or federal) in which the student is enrolled.
4. Schools must maximize locally based creativity and innovation in the development, dissemination, and incorporation of curriculum and instructional strategies within a region.

Strategies and Initiatives

The following strategies and initiatives are proposed so as to enable and require school districts to respond in a comprehensive manner to the needs of Native learners. Ideas to cause school districts to respond, in a comprehensive manner, to the needs of Native students include expanding the role of the parent committees, increasing parent and community involvement, and requiring the development of district-wide comprehensive Native education plans.

Currently, every Native education grant program requires a needs assessment and parent and community involvement in the development of projects and their implementation. The role of Native parent advisory committees, established for the purposes of Native education programmatic efforts should be expanded to include advisory input on all aspects of school district programs, policies, and procedures. These committees should be consulted on all formal planning requirements of a school district as representing Native parent and community input.

Native parent advisory committees must insure the maximum involvement of Native parents and community members in school district planning and development rather than becoming sole representatives of parental involvement. Native parent committees must become a vehicle through which Native parents and community members become involved in providing advise. Broadly based comprehensive needs assessment establishing priorities (rather than survey endorsements of specific programmatic approaches) and public meetings on non- proposal related topics, would increase and broaden the definition and description of needs that Native parent committees are required to represent in all planning and development activities.

School districts should be required to develop a comprehensive long-range Plan for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. These plans would establish district-wide goals and objectives for the education of American Natives establishing specific milestones for improvement. These district-wide plans should encompass the entire scope of school district programs, policies and procedures, and identify how *all* resources will be organized to accomplish the plan.

These comprehensive district-wide Native education plans would identify the specific role of Native education programmatic efforts within the total scope of efforts to meet the needs of Native students. They would enable a school district to be held accountable to specific objectives, to evaluate the strategies used and to readjust approaches. These plans should be developed by school districts with the involvement and endorsement of Native parents and community members.

There are a number of ways in which these ideas can be accomplished. In Minnesota these ideas have been approached through state legislation. This legislation has required establishment of Native parent advisory committees to maximize Native parent involvement and input in all aspects of school district programs, policies, and procedures. Significant progress will occur in the ability of school districts to respond to the needs of Native students when state governments take an active progressive role with regard to Native education. There are a number of ways in which the federal government can accomplish these ideas and the purposes underlying them directly within a school district or generally encourage the involvement of states.

The federal strategy involves directly requiring these initiatives and broadening the scope and coordination of federal involvement with Native education in a state public school districts. All federal categorical programs and not just Native education efforts can be amended to include a recognition of the unique academic and culturally related education needs of American Natives. Within the context of these programs, school districts can be required to describe how the purposes of these programs will address the needs of Native learners. All federal categorical programs can require documentation of a Native needs assessment and Native parent involvement and input.

As a requirement for participation of a school district in all federal programs or as a requirement for each specific federal program, a school district can be required to develop a comprehensive district-wide plan for the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. These plans can

describe the comprehensive interaction of all federal programs in meeting the needs of Native learners and improving their educational status.

Federal education efforts administered through state government, which require a statewide plan such as Adult Education or the Block Grant Program, can be amended to include specific requirements to accomplish district-wide planning and development regarding Native education.

The federal government can require the development of a statewide plan for the education of Native learners tied to all federal sources of revenue within state public school districts. This plan could be conditional to varying degrees under certain circumstances on the participation of a state with federal programs, would document certain requirements important to Native parents, communities, and tribes such as how state public school districts will respond to the needs of Native learners and will utilize federal resources in the process. This statewide plan could mandate requirements to which all state public school districts must comply, such as district-wide plans or expanding parent involvement.

Native education programmatic efforts can be amended to require more comprehensive parent committee involvement and a justification of the proposal within the context of a district-wide effort to improve Native education. Within this context federal Native education programmatic efforts can be changed to take on a more long-term planning and development role. Long-term multi-year funding of a particular idea intended to be incorporated into the school district can be required before allowing the district to submit a proposal for a different idea.

An important change in policy affecting the ability of Natives to have input in state public school districts, in reservation areas, concerns federal Impact Aid. Federal Impact Aid could be incorporated into the idea of requiring a comprehensive school district plan for improving Native education. This would bring Impact Aid as operational dollars into the scope of a district-wide response to meeting the needs of Native learners in the same manner as intended for state revenue. A more radical position important to strategies and initiatives regarding Native choice and funding equity concerns a change in the view of what is Impact Aid. The current view is half a picture. This view says that Impact Aid is that revenue which makes up for the impact of tax exempt reservation lands within the territory of a state public school district. The other half of the picture can include the view that Impact Aid which involves trust status lands is directly tied into the federal and tribal government relationship and represents a unique form of tribal tax resource for education. This view could require, under certain conditions and standards, important to reservation-wide public education, more direct tribal government say so in the expenditure of the funds, and flexible allocation of these resources to tribal and other types of schools.

The following strategies and initiatives are proposed to enable effective and meaningful choices for American Natives students within a region of "public" education for American Natives.

Within Native reservation settings there exists an increasing diversity of schools; federal, tribal and state public schools. Native student enrollment within federal and tribal schools are drawn from state public schools in the region. This transfer of Native students is often not a one-way trip nor does it occur for the same reasons or for particular types of students. Because of the character of federal and tribal schools there exists a real choice for Native students, a choice in which the atmosphere of the school is or can be very different than that of a state public school. The isolation of federal and tribal schools in the region financially and programmatically causes many issues which affect the quality and diversity of curricular options for students attending federal and tribal schools and which cause state public schools to avoid improvements of its program quality and effectiveness.

We must improve the overall quality of education programs in tribal schools, enable equitable funding to all types of schools within the same area, allow for competition among schools for Native students, enable Native students to maximize the utilization of all types of schools and programs, and enable the development and dissemination of creative and innovative approaches to Native education.

Currently, when Native students attend tribal schools the overall quality of education within both tribal and state public schools declines. This is caused by the way these types of schools are funded and what occurs to the resources available for the public education of American Indians and Alaska Natives collectively within the region if a Native student transfers to a tribal school from a state public school.

Funding of tribal schools occurs on a per-pupil basis according to the number of eligible students present at a particular time. The amount available for an Native student's education is typically less than that available for the same student in the state public school. Also those Native students who

transfer during the year to a tribal school are not provided any revenue for their public education from any source, federal or state.

The state public school is deprived of all the revenue it would have received for students who are at the tribal school and the revenue for students who transferred during the year. The tribal school does not get the difference between what it gets from the federal government and what the state would have provided for students enrolled in the Fall and the school gets nothing for students who transfer mid-year. Consequently, the overall quality and resources available for the public education of American Indians and Alaska Natives declines when an Native student exercises his/her choice.

In many reservation areas the revenue loss for state public schools is very significant. The transfer of Native students out of state public schools, for example, cannot only reduce the amount of Impact Aid available on a per-pupil basis, but change the rate as well. Added to these losses are the other losses of state foundation revenue and categorical aid. The amount is very significant, and the loss is not compensated in the funding of tribal schools. Not only is the overall quality of education lowered, but the ability to cooperate programmatically, share or purchase services, etc., is eliminated for the lack of funds.

If an equitable basis and means of funding tribal schools could be developed there would exist a means to purchase services from state public schools as desired. Such schools would then receive income based upon providing such activities or services. This would allow tribal schools to utilize the diversity of courses and activities in the area, to become more effective in the provision of the total array of special education services through the development of cooperative arrangements with state public schools. The ability of state public schools to be effective with Native students is enhanced when these schools compete, to provide services to meet the needs of Native students and to retain the enrollment of Native students through effective program development.

For example, in Minnesota an effort to change the rules for athletic competition has been made as a strategy for retaining Native student enrollment in state public schools. Native students enrolled in the state public schools in the Fond du Lac Reservation are allowed to play on the tribal school athletic teams and vice versa. There is also an idea to allow students attending the tribal schools to participate in the band, take a foreign language or advanced math courses in the state public school.

Ttribal schools, because of their experience in developing instruction and curricular strategies, can become an effective resource for state public schools. Tribal schools may be more effective in the proper assessment of specific education needs, but may not have the resources or programs to respond directly to these needs.

By changing the basis and means for funding tribal schools and enabling or promoting certain forms of regional cooperation, the capacity of all types of public education within the region to meet the needs of Native students is enhanced as is the overall quality and effectiveness of Native public education.

These ideas can be enhanced through efforts to "regionalize" reservation area federal and state and tribal public education through advancing tribal governments' political and legal involvement in public education.

Within many Native reservations throughout the United States, the jurisdiction of tribal governments and state public schools overlap. Currently, all forms of federal assistance related to Native education and Impact Aid require some form of Native advice on the expenditure of funds within state public schools. Significant issues exist over the viability of Native input into public school districts. As indicated, already there are significant issues related to the transfer of Native students between state and tribal schools affecting programmatic and financial issues.

In order to coordinate focused tribal governmental involvement in reservation Native education, a provision can be developed to either require or enable the development of a tribal government/state government (including those school districts within the scope of a tribal jurisdiction) education agreements. Such agreements if required of state government could place certain requirements upon state and state public school districts regarding the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Any number of specific items could be negotiated, including academic, athletic activities, specific education cooperation, etc.

Specific issues regarding how federal Impact Aid and other federal Categorical Aid is to be expended could be negotiated within certain limits important to the interests of tribal citizens. The required or enabled state/tribal government negotiation of these and other matters affecting the education of Native students within state public schools, or the relationships between various types of schools within a reservation area would be beneficial in a number of ways. Not only would a number of specifics be resolved, but Native education could be regionalized and stabilized in the

interests of Native learners as previously indicated.

It is proposed that model regional Native Resource Centers within tribal schools be developed that would enable tribal schools to cooperate with public schools in the improvement of Native education. Tribal schools could serve as centers of expertise to cooperate under agreement with regional public schools to facilitate improved learning opportunity for Native children in public schools. Public schools could similarly cooperate with tribal schools to enhance certain education experiences for Native children.

Another strategy important to regionalizing the Native education and advancing tribal political and legal involvement in Native education within a region is to encourage the development of tribal codes and ordinances regarding education and to enable these standards and criteria to create an appropriate context of standards and criteria for the public education of tribal citizens within all types of schools.

A very significant need is to create an equitable funding formula for tribally operated schools so that these schools can have the same amount and type of resources as state public schools. There are two major forms of revenue which must be considered, state Foundation Revenue and federal Impact Aid. Given the current basis and means for funding tribally operated schools, these sources do not follow mid-year student transfers from public schools to tribal schools nor are they available to equalize differences in what is provided a tribal school with what should be provided a tribal school given state standards.

Two policy initiatives affecting the definition of these sources of revenue needs to be made. State revenue must become available to tribal schools without affecting the nature and character of tribal control of these schools. The proposition most likely to work is the view that state responsibility for the education of Native state citizens is not eliminated because a tribal government asserts its jurisdiction to operate a school. In such a situation, the state's responsibility can be defined as financial in character, the amount of which can be determined given the character of federal funding in comparison to state funding.

This proposition, which is the underlying foundation of Minnesota's state tribal School Equalization Act could be advanced by the federal government through legislation.

A second initiative regards changing the definition of federal Impact Aid so as to minimally make this source of revenue also available to equalize other federal sources of per pupil aid the same as intended with state revenue and to enhance the ability of tribal schools to utilize the aid available from Impact Aid for students who transfer. Another possibility is to write tribally operated schools and colleges into the Impact Aid law in such a way as to create equitable funding for these schools whereby Impact Aid is viewed as a sort of tribal education tax levy to be added to the funding of tribally operated schools as part of the overall revenue picture for such schools.

The situation within large urban and metropolitan school districts presents many of the same possibilities for creating a regional system for the public education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Missing in many urban areas is the central focus of a tribal school. Development of urban Native education must include, as a key component, the development of publicly funded Native schools so as to enable the same options and dynamics to occur as envisioned for reservation area public education. Within Minneapolis a number of proposals have been offered ranging from a separately established metro-wide Native controlled state public school district for Natives, a Native magnet school as part of a district desegregation effort, an Native target school focusing Native related programs and chartered schools for Natives.

A major hindrance to the development of these schools and, indeed, the ability of Native education programmatic efforts within the urban public school districts, is the implementation of the desegregation policy. The federal government can assist in the development of Native school options by formally asserting the unique political and legal status of American Indians and Alaska Natives and the unique academic and culturally related educational needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives.

A number of distinct possibilities exists. A few have been mentioned with regard to federal categorical aid and the development of an Native education long-range plan. Others require strategies to broaden the application of federal laws affecting Native education such as the recent act affecting native language to include urban public school districts with the same regard and style the federal government applies civil rights laws. Given that some urban public school districts have entered into Johnson O'Malley contracts with tribal governments, the federal government could also legislatively enable similar relationships in facilitating the development of Native schools within urban areas.

There is a broad need to review and strengthen the unique status of Native education within the overall discussion and concern for the education of

minorities within the United States. We need to sharpen and enforce our sense of the "possible" in the construction of recommendations and options for improving the education of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Public education policy is strongly influenced by our vision of society and what it should become. A vision which does not incorporate an accurate sense of American Native and Alaska Native experience or history or the political legal realities of tribal government is not complete nor an accurate vision upon which to develop public policy considerations.

Public education policy is also strongly influenced by what is legally and politically possible. The political legal status of tribal government, the public policy thrust of the federal government and the existence of schools operated by tribal government under contract with the federal government provide a unique set of legal and political options available for the education of American Indian and Alaska Native children. Public education may fail Natives because it excludes from consideration *all* of the possible options which could be conceived or developed for improving Native education which emerge from a consideration of the legal and political "resources" uniquely available to American Indians and Alaska Natives.

About the Author

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